

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Ruan, John House

USE THIS COPY
FOR DUPLICATING

and or common Grand Army Republic Memorial Hall

2. Location

street & number 4278-80 Griscom Street not for publication

city, town Philadelphia vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 042 county code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Philadelphia Camp, Sons of Union Veterans of Civil War, Inc.

street & number 4278-80 Griscom Street

city, town Philadelphia vicinity of state Pa. 19124

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds, Room 153

street & number City Hall

city, town Philadelphia state Pa. 19107

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Phila. Register of Historic Places this property has been certified
has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1/3/85 federal state county local

depository for survey records Philadelphia Historical Commission

7. Description

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The John Ruan house at 4278 Griscom Street in Philadelphia, located near the old center of the town of Frankford is a generously dimensioned two and a half story late Georgian brick dwelling. Originally built on a hill overlooking Frankford Avenue, the house now stands in the same location tight against the sidewalk of Griscom Street, a block from Frankford Avenue. The grade has been substantially lowered at the front of the building bringing it to nearly the level of the basement floor. A small attached brick wing of the house is now a separately owned dwelling. The rear and side yards provide some open space around the building.

The front facade of the main block is a completely symmetrical five bay design. Built of hand pressed red brick, the walls are laid in common bond. The house foundation, composed of rubble stone, has been exposed an additional four to five feet below its original condition and a layer of stucco has been applied to consolidate and hide the rough stonework. Both the original doorway and basement windows have been greatly elongated due to the grade change. The front entranceway, located at the center of the facade, has been altered in the late 19th century. Three marble steps lead up to a very tall panelled entranceway with a set of panelled and glazed wooden doors surmounted by a huge rectangular two light transom. An awkward Victorian entrance hood supported by wooden brackets shelters the door stoop and partially hides the remains of the original door framing. The relatively simple fenestration of the front facade includes a pair of windows on either side of the doorway and five windows on the second floor. All of the windows have simple stone sills though they lack any type of lintels. The window frames, which support the weight of the brick work above, are heavy wooden box frames pegged together at the corners. The two windows to the left of the doorway retain the original 6/6 sash that were replaced in most other locations by aluminum 1/1 sash. The front facade is completed by two horizontal elements, a single brick beltcourse and a wooden denticulated cornice with punch and gouge work details.

The south wall of the house contains three symmetrically placed windows per floor with a small fanlight in the attic story. The first floor window openings, some of which retain their 6/6 sash, have been elongated on the bottom and the extra space has been infilled with wooden panels. At one time, these openings lead out onto a wooden porch, since removed. The second floor windows contain aluminum replacement sash. The gable end rises up to form a wide brick interior end chimney.

The north wall is largely hidden from view by the added wing, however there exists one large sash window per floor located at the front corner of the house and a tiny square attic window that has been bricked up in the late 19th century. The chimney originally located at the north gable end has been removed.

The openings on the rear include two windows per floor at either end of the facade and a central window between stories that lights the grand stairway. The simple rear door is placed off center, greatly reducing the formality of the facade. A brick string course and carved wooden cornice duplicate the decorations of the front facade.

The gable roof, which runs parallel to the street, contains four symmetrically spaced gabled dormers. The dormers, composed of two pilasters supporting a denticulated pediment, presently contain simple 1/1 aluminum replacement sash, although originally the front dormers contained more ornate 6/6 round headed wooden sash. The original

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	XX architecture	education	military	XX social
XX 1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

Specific dates 1796 Builder Architect not known

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Ruan house, built in 1796, possesses significance as a rare example of an 18th century Georgian mansion in Philadelphia and the only house of its age and size left in Frankford. Additionally the house, built by John Ruan, served as the home of this well respected medical doctor and community leader for fifteen years.

The John Ruan house is an unusually large though simple example of late Georgian architecture. At the time of its building, Frankford formed a small market and industrial town clustered along the Philadelphia Bristol Pike and the Frankford Creek. Although Frankford dates back to the Colonial period, the Ruan house, measuring 40 feet by 35 feet is an exceptionally large building for its time and place. Stylistically, the house contains many of the classic elements of Georgian design. On the exterior, these elements include the rectangular massing divided into five symmetrical bays; the gabled roof, still retaining some of its original wooden shingles; the hand pressed brick walls circled by a brick string course; several 6/6 sash windows; and the handsome punch and gougework cornice. On the interior, the Georgian style finds expression in the center hall plan; carved wooden mantels with Welford figures; and delicately winding wooden staircase. The house stands as a relatively simple example of its style however, as can be noted in the use of common as opposed to flemish bond and the use of box window frames instead of the more decorative lintels and keystones.

Compared with the classic Georgian houses of Philadelphia, the Ruan House is unique in the city because of its size and simplicity. The Ruan House, unlike the Georgian estates of Fairmount Park, was not built as a country pleasure palace nor was it an inner city Georgian rowhouse, rather it represents the townhouse of an upper middle class resident of a small industrial town. The house shows a great many similarities with a classic Georgian house such as the Deshler Morris House in Germantown including its interior plans, five bay width, gabled roof with double end chimneys, pedimented dormers and ornate punch and gougework cornice. In size the Ruan House is four feet wider than the Deshler Morris House in spite of the fact that it was built for a much less wealthy man. The house's relative flatness of detail is indicative of both the limited wealth of the owner and the influence of the Federal style on the late Georgian structure.

John Ruan, the builder of the house, was a medical doctor and community leader who practiced in both Frankford and Philadelphia for many years. Born in 1771 in St. Croix, the West Indies, John Ruan was sent to Princeton College to receive his first degree in 1790. The next year he went to the University of Edinburgh, at the time one of the most renowned schools of medicine in the world, and received his degree in medicine. Returning to the United States from Europe in 1793, Dr. Ruan opened his practice in Frankford, buying a half acre lot and a small dwelling. In 1794 and 1795 Dr. Ruan paid respectively 220 and 214 pounds in tax. In 1796 he paid 415 pounds tax, the additional 200 pounds being paid on "1 brick dwelling" leading us to believe that he had the John Ruan house

(continued on page 2)

The Frankford United Neighbors
Community Development Corporation
4231 Paul St.
Phila. Pa. 19124

Dr. Larry E. Tiese
State Historical Preservation Officer
Pennsylvania Historical and
Museum Commission
P.O. Box 1026
Harrisburg, Pa. 17108-1026

Dear Dr. Tiese,

We are very pleased that a building in our area is being considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. This building is known as the Phila. Camp Sons of the Civil War Memorial Hall, and is located at 4278-80 Griscom St., Philadelphia, Pa., 19124. As an emerging community development corporation, one of our goals is to help revitalize the Frankford area and provide places of cultural and historic interest.

It is our sincere hope that you will add this building to your list of historic properties, making possible its' restoration to the original condition.

We feel that a listing in the National Register would be a welcome asset to our neighborhood and something that would arouse community pride.

Sincerely,

John R. Schol, Chairperson
The Frankford United Neighbors
Community Development Corporation



HIST.
LP-25,

June 20, 1985

Dr. Larry E. Tise
State Historic Preservation Officer
PA Historical and Museum Commission
P.O. Box 1026
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: John Ruan House
Philadelphia County

Dear Dr. Tise:

I am writing in support of the nomination of the John Ruan House to the National Register of Historic Sites. I feel that the plans of the Philadelphia Camp Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War for complete restoration of the John Ruan House would be very beneficial to the Frankford area.

Therefore, I would like my support for the nomination noted for the record.

With best regards, I remain

Sincerely,

PATRICIA A. HUGHES
Councilwoman - 7th District

PAH:ims

RECEIVED

JUN 27 1985

GERARD A. KOSINSKI, MEMBER
2319 MARGARET STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19137
PHONE: (215) 533-5553

600 MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING
HOUSE POST OFFICE BOX 166
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120
PHONE: (717) 783-9342



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES

JUDICIARY, SECRETARY
SUB-COMMITTEE ON COURTS
EDUCATION,
SUB-COMMITTEE ON BASIC
EDUCATION
SUB-COMMITTEE ON HIGHER
EDUCATION
LABOR RELATIONS

*High
Levity*

June 18, 1985

Mr. Larry E. Tise, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum
Commission
P.O. Box 1026
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17108-1026

Dear Mr. Tise:

I am writing on behalf of the Philadelphia Camp, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, who have applied for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. It is my understanding that you will be having a hearing on this on July 9, 1985.

I am whole heartily behind the Philadelphia Camp, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War in having their G.A.R. Memorial Hall at 4278 Griscom Street declared a historic site. It is the last home of its size and architecture still standing in the Frankford neighborhood. Frankford is currently undergoing a rebirth and I think it would be essential that this Memorial Hall be declared a historic site and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Philadelphia Camp, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War are interested in trying to restore the building to its original condition and I stand with them to help them in any way to see that this is done.

Please keep me informed as to the status of their application. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerard A. Kosinski".

GERARD A. KOSINSKI
State Representative
175th District

GAK:lfm

ROBERT A. BORSKI
30th DISTRICT PENNSYLVANIA

COMMITTEES
MERCHANT MARINE
AND FISHERIES
PUBLIC WORKS
AND TRANSPORTATION
SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC

PHILADELPHIA OFFICES
311 CANNON BUILDING
WASHINGTON DC 20515
(202) 225-8251
1137 FRANKFORD AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19135
(215) 535-3355
3405 KENSINGTON AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19134
(215) 423-5662
7208 NORTH BROAD STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19125
(215) 424-8430

June 19, 1985

Pennsylvania Historical Commission
Mr. Larry Tise
Executive Director
Box 1026
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Handwritten:
Hist.
Pres.

RE: G.A.R. Memorial Hall
4278 Griscom Street
Phila., PA 19124

Dear Sir:

It has come to my attention that the above-mentioned Civil War era building within my district is being considered for a nomination to the National Register of Historic Sites.

This building was erected in 1796 by Dr. John Ruan, and is the last remaining structure of its size and architecture in the Frankford area.

The non-profit corporation which currently houses a Civil War Museum within this building has expressed interest in an attempt to restore the structure to its original condition.

As I feel that this project would be beneficial to the Frankford area, I wished to express to you my support of its nomination to the National Register of Historic Sites.

Please keep me informed of the status of this matter as it will be of interest and benefit to my constituents, as well as myself.

Thank you for your interest and consideration.

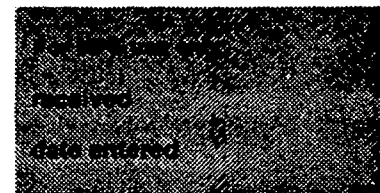
Sincerely,

Robert A. Borski
Member of Congress

RAB:mjp

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet John Swan House Item number 7 - Description Page #2

wooden truss system that supports the roof is visible in the attic. Each of the beams are numbered with a Roman numeral. Modern asphalt shingles presently cover the roof and hide the original shingles.

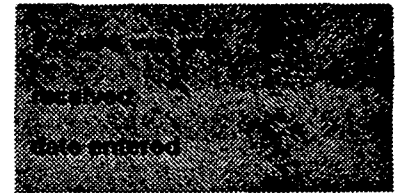
The interior continues the late Georgian plan and decoration of the exterior. The first floor retains the original center hall plan with its elaborately curving central staircase rising up from the entrance hall. The first and second floor rooms contain some mantels decorated with punch and gouge carving and Welford figures. The second floor has been altered with the two front rooms opened up into one large space.

The house has a two story gabled wing, which though presently a separate dwelling, remains a visually related part of the building. The early 19th century brick addition has no separate southern wall, but rather is built directly against the wall of the original house. The addition is three bays wide and has a modern porch. The simple window and door openings contain aluminum sash and modern door.

The house is relatively intact for its nearly 200 years of existence. Its setting has changed both in grade and surroundings and repairs have been made as inexpensively as possible, however the essential form and detail of the Georgian building remain intact. It remains as the only Georgian mansion left in Frankford.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet John Ruan House Item number 8- Significance Page 2

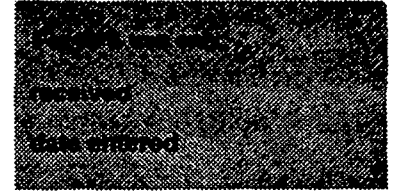
built that year. Additionally, Dr. Ruan took out an Insurance Company of North America policy in 1796 to cover a 2 story brick house for \$1000. The large though unostentatious house served the doctor well as it is likely that he both lived in and practiced in his house. The building also housed his family, as he married in 1793 and had two children. During his 15 years in the house, Dr. Ruan performed other important responsibilities in Frankford besides his practice. In 1803 Ruan was elected a member of the first board of managers of the Frankford and Bristol Turnpike Road Company. He served as a trustee of the Frankford Academy and was elected as Chief Burgess of Frankford in 1806. Although Dr. Ruan left Frankford around 1807, he later went on to an extremely successful practice in Bucks County and in Philadelphia. A street in Frankford has been named for Dr. Ruan on recognition of his importance to the community.

The Ruan House has been home to several other prominent Frankford citizens. Samuel Pickering was a second Physician and respected citizen of Frankford who lived in the Ruan House. Dr. Pickering graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in 1816 and specialized in the functions of the nervous system. A friend of President John Adams. Dr. Pickering lived in the Ruan House from 1824 until his death in 1842. A third owner and resident of the Ruan House, Mr. Samuel Brooke, owned and ran a large machine shop on Frankford Avenue above Adams Avenue. Mr. Brooke and his family occupied the house between 1847 and 1872. Within the largely working class society of Frankford, all of these men were widely respected and important leaders in the community.

The John Ruan house remains as a fine example of Georgian architecture telling us a great deal about the social and architectural history of Frankford. The building, built by the locally prominent Dr. John Ruan, remains as a unique example of its size and style in the community of Frankford in Northeast Philadelphia. The Ruan House is the last remaining example of the very few large houses built before 1800 in Frankford. Although the community of Frankford numbered some 3,200 souls in 1800, there are fewer than a half-dozen 18th century structures left in the area. The larger houses such as Chalkley Hall, and the Womrath and Allen estates have all been demolished leaving only the Ruan House to represent this type and class of house in Frankford. Currently occupied by a Civil War museum, there are plans to restore the house to its 18th century condition.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet

John Ruan House

Item number 10- Verbal boundary Page 2

side of Griscom Street (forty feet wide) at the distance of sixty-eight feet three eighths of an inch Northeastwardly from the Northeasterly side of Ruan Street (Forty feet wide) in the Twenty Third Ward of the City of Philadelphia. Thence extending North Fifty one degrees two minutes forty-six seconds West and passing through a certain Eighteen inch concrete retaining wall Ninety two feet five inches to a point: Thence extending North Thirty-eight degrees Fifty Seven minutes fourteen seconds, East one foot eleven and three quarters inches to a point: Thence extending further North Fifty-one degrees two minutes forty six seconds West Twenty feet two and one half inches to a point; Thence extending North Thirty-seven degrees six minutes fifteen seconds East Forty-six feet six inches to a point: Thence extending South fifty-one degrees thirty-five minutes fifteen seconds East and passing partly through the centre of a party wall erected on this building and the building to the Northeast one hundred twelve feet six and three eighths inches to a point on the Northwest side of Griscom Street. Thence extending along same South Thirty-seven degrees six minutes fifteen seconds West Forty-nine Feet six and one-half inches to the first mentioned point and place of beginning. Being known and numbered as 4272-20 Griscom Street.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Frankford Historical Society Papers" Volume I
The Bristol Pike - Hotchkiss, S.F.
Obituary for John Ruan - Transactions of the American Medical Assn. P. 462-463
City Maps of 23rd Ward, 1803, 1876, 1910
Tax Records Oxford Township 1793-1798

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Frankford, Pa. - N. J.

Quadrangle scale 1 to 24,000

UTM References

A

1	8	4	9	2	2	2	0	4	4	2	8	6	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Described according to a survey and plan thereof made by Philip H. Hornig, Esq. Surveyor of the Eighth District on 5/27/58 as follows; Beginning at a point on the Northwesterly (continued on page 2)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margaret E. Atkinson, Secretary

organization Phila. Camp Sons Union Veterans Civil War, date 5/4/85
Inc.

street & number 1016 Gorman St. telephone 215-673-1688

city or town Philadelphia state Pa. 19116

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Larry E. Tise State Historic Preservation Officer date 7/11/85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

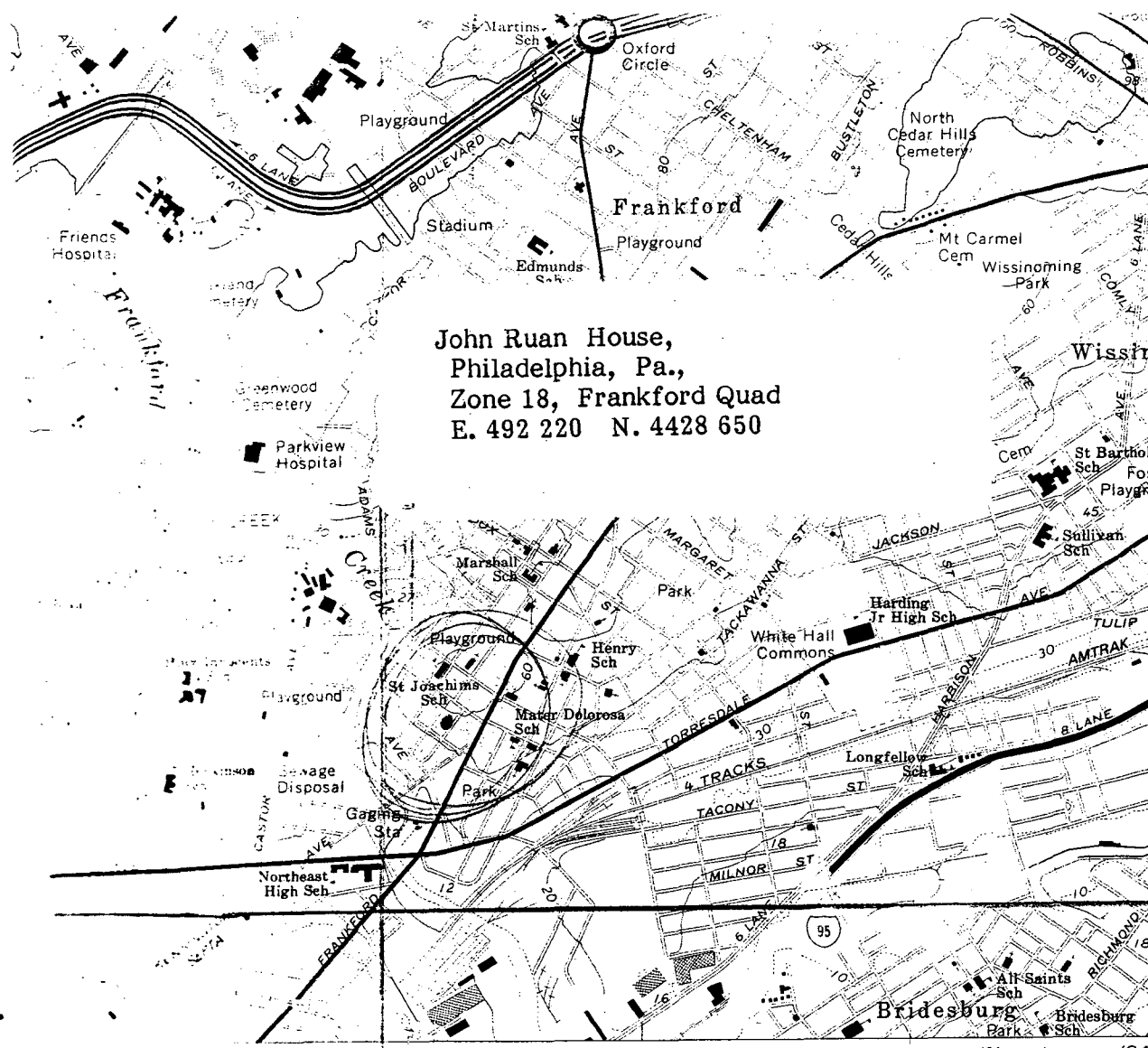
date

Keeper of the National Register

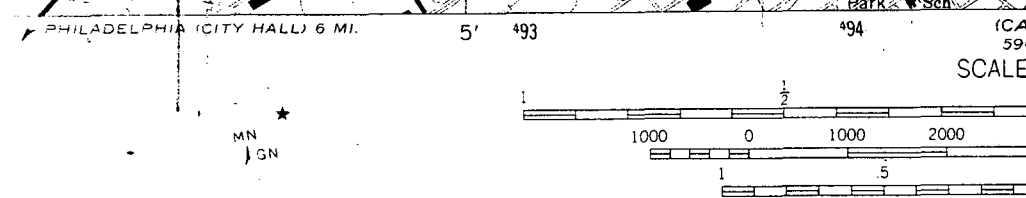
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



John Ruan House,
 Philadelphia, Pa.,
 Zone 18, Frankford Quad
 E. 492 220 N. 4428 650



11
 204 MILS 0°02'
 1 MIL

UTM GRID AND 1983 MAGNETIC NORTH
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 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
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 THE MEAN RANGE OF TIC

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NAT
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICA
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAI

